

AUGUST 16, 1976

THE REPUBLICANS IN CONVENTION

ANNCR:

CHRIS KERN HAS SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE OPENING OF THE
REPUBLICAN PARTY PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATING CONVENTION IN KANSAS CITY,
MISSOURI.

VOICE:

KANSAS CITY IS GEOGRAPHICALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY IN THE
MIDDLE OF THIS COUNTRY -- A SORT OF NATIONAL CENTER OF GRAVITY -- AND
THE REPUBLICANS ARE MEETING HERE IN AN ATTEMPT TO REGAIN THEIR SENSE
OF EQUILIBRIUM.

THE PARTY WAS SHAKEN BADLY BY WATERGATE AND THE NIXON RESIGNATION
BUT IT HAS SURVIVED AND GOVERNED FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS
AND THAT IS THE SOURCE OF THE IRONY ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE THIS
WEEK. EVEN PRESIDENT FORD'S POLITICAL OPPONENTS CONCEDE
THAT HE HAS RESTORED DECENCY AND HONOR TO THE WHITE HOUSE, BUT A
NUMBER OF MR. FORD'S POLITICAL ALLIES ARE CHALLENGING HIM NOW ON
THE GROUNDS THAT HIS FLEXIBILITY AMOUNTS TO LACK OF IDEALOGIC
COMMITMENT.

ACTUALLY, THE DIFFERENCES IN PHILOSOPHY BETWEEN THE FORD AND
REAGAN POSITIONS ARE DIFFICULT EVEN FOR THE INITIATED TO
DISCERN. THE TWO MEN DO DISAGREE ON A FEW SPECIFIC ISSUES, BUT
BOTH ARE PREPARED TO STAND BEHIND THE PARTY PROGRAM THAT HAS
TENTATIVELY BEEN ADOPTED BY THE DELEGATES TO THIS CONVENTION. AND
SOME OF MR. FORD'S SUPPORTERS STILL WISH THAT THEY WOULD STAND
BEHIND IT TOGETHER WITH MR. REAGAN AS THE PARTY'S VICE PRESIDENTIAL
CANDIDATE.

THE REAGAN PEOPLE SAY THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE BUT THAT'S FOR REASONS
OF POLITICS. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE OPPOSING REPUBLICAN

FORCES DO PERCEIVE IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO CANDIDATES. THERE IS ALSO NO DOUBT THAT MANY OF THOSE DIFFERENCES WOULD QUICKLY DISAPPEAR UNDER THE PRACTICAL PRESSURES OF GOVERNING IF MR. REAGAN WERE NOMINATED AND ELECTED.

(OPT) WHAT MOTIVATES MR. REAGAN'S SUPPORTERS IN THEIR ATTEMPT TO DISOWN THEIR PARTY'S OWN INCUMBENT PRESIDENT IS A FEELING THAT THE PARTY WILL HAVE A POLITICAL REBIRTH IF ONLY IT CAN BE MADE IDEOLOGICALLY COHERENT. , BUT MANY OTHER REPUBLICANS-- NOT ALL OF THEM ENTHUSIASTIC FORD SUPPORTERS -- FEAR THAT THE RESULT COULD BE JUST THE OPPOSITE. (END OPT)

PRAGMATIC, IDEOLOGICALLY COHERENT PARTIES HAVE NEVER HAD MUCH OF A PLACE IN THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SCHEME OF THINGS. THIS COUNTRY'S PARTY SYSTEM IS BASED ON HAVING TWO BROAD COALITIONS THAT CAN WIN THOUSANDS OF LOCAL ELECTIONS BY PUTTING UP THOUSANDS OF GOOD CANDIDATES WHO GET ELECTED AS A RESULT OF THEIR POSITIONS ON THOUSANDS OF LOCAL ISSUES. IN SUM, THE PARTIES TEND TO GET THEIR COLORATION AS A RESULT OF THE POSITIONS TAKEN BY THOSE LOCAL CANDIDATES, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND.

AND NO ONE EXPECTS THE SYSTEM TO CHANGE HERE IN KANSAS CITY.

NES/PY